

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing access to a candidate's personal background data, wherein the data have been verified, the method comprising:

5 a. establishing a data record, relating to the candidate's personal background data, in a digital storage medium, the data record associated with a unique identifier and including

(i) a set of components based on information supplied by the candidate, each component being potentially verifiable, and

10 (ii) a corresponding set of query results, the corresponding set including, with respect to each component, the result of a verification query to a third party;

b. communicating the identifier to the candidate;

c. receiving, over a communication network, the identifier from an

15 outside user wanting verification of the candidate's personal background

data, the outside user having received the identifier directly or indirectly from the candidate; and

d. distributing, to the outside user, over the communication network, an electronic document including the data record and an electronic

20 authentication of the contents of the data record, the electronic authentication capable of revealing unauthorized modifications of the contents of the data record.

25 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein establishing the data record

includes:

a. from a computer at a first location, separately specifying over a network to a host computer a set of components of the candidate's personal background data, each component being potentially verifiable by contacting a third party;

30 b. storing, in a digital storage medium in communication with the host computer, the set of components;

c. for each component of the set, identifying a relevant third party and pertinent contact information therefor;

communicating a query to the relevant third party to verify the component, and obtaining a query result from the query; and

5 associating the query result with the component and storing the query result in the storage medium.

10 3. A method according to claim 2, wherein specifying the set of components includes providing responses via a set of templates, the set of templates having at least one member and being structured to evince the content of the set of components.

15 4. A method according to claim 2, wherein specifying the set of components is performed over the Internet.

5. A method according to claim 4, in which obtaining a query result from the query is performed over the Internet.

20 6. A method according to claim 4, wherein specifying the set of components includes specifying the set of components to a World Wide Web server.

7. A method according to claim 6, in which communicating a query to the relevant third party to verify the component is performed over the Internet.

25 8. A method according to claim 7, wherein communicating a query to the relevant third party to verify the component is performed automatically and includes sending the query as E-Mail.

30 9. A method according to claim 1, in which communicating the identifier to the candidate is performed over the Internet.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein communicating the identifier to the candidate is performed automatically and includes sending the identifier as E-Mail over the Internet.

5 11. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic document is distributed in the form of an electronic mail message.

12. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic document is distributed in the form of an electronic file.

10

13. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic authentication is an electronic watermark.

15

14. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic authentication is an electronic certification.

15. A method according to claim 1, wherein the set of components includes the candidate's résumé information, and wherein the set of query results includes information verifying the candidate's résumé information.

20

16. A system for providing access to a candidate's personal background data, wherein the data have been verified, the system comprising:

25 (a) a storage arrangement on which is stored a database having a plurality of data records, each data record relating to personal background data of a candidate, each data record associated with a unique identifier that is communicated to the candidate and including

(i) a set of components based on information supplied by a candidate, each component being potentially verifiable, and

30 (ii) a corresponding set of query results, the corresponding set including, with respect to each component, the result of a verification query to a third party; and

(b) a process, running on a computer in communication with the digital storage medium, for selectively distributing, to an authorized person presenting an identifier received directly or indirectly from a candidate, over a communication network, an electronic document including the candidate's data record and an electronic authentication of the contents of the data record, the electronic authentication capable of revealing unauthorized modifications of the contents of the data record.

17. A computer-readable medium having embodied therein an electronic document, the electronic document comprising:

(a) a data record including

(i) a set of components based on information supplied by a candidate, each component being potentially verifiable, and

(ii) a corresponding set of query results, the corresponding set

15 including, with respect to each component, the result of a verification query to a third party; and

(b) an electronic authentication of the contents of the data record, the electronic authentication capable of revealing unauthorized modifications of the contents of the data record.

20 18. A computer-readable medium according to claim 17, wherein the electronic authentication is an electronic watermark.

25 19. A computer-readable medium according to claim 17, wherein the electronic authentication is an electronic certification.

20. A computer-readable medium according to claim 17, wherein the set of components includes the candidate's résumé information, and wherein the set of query results includes information verifying the candidate's résumé information.